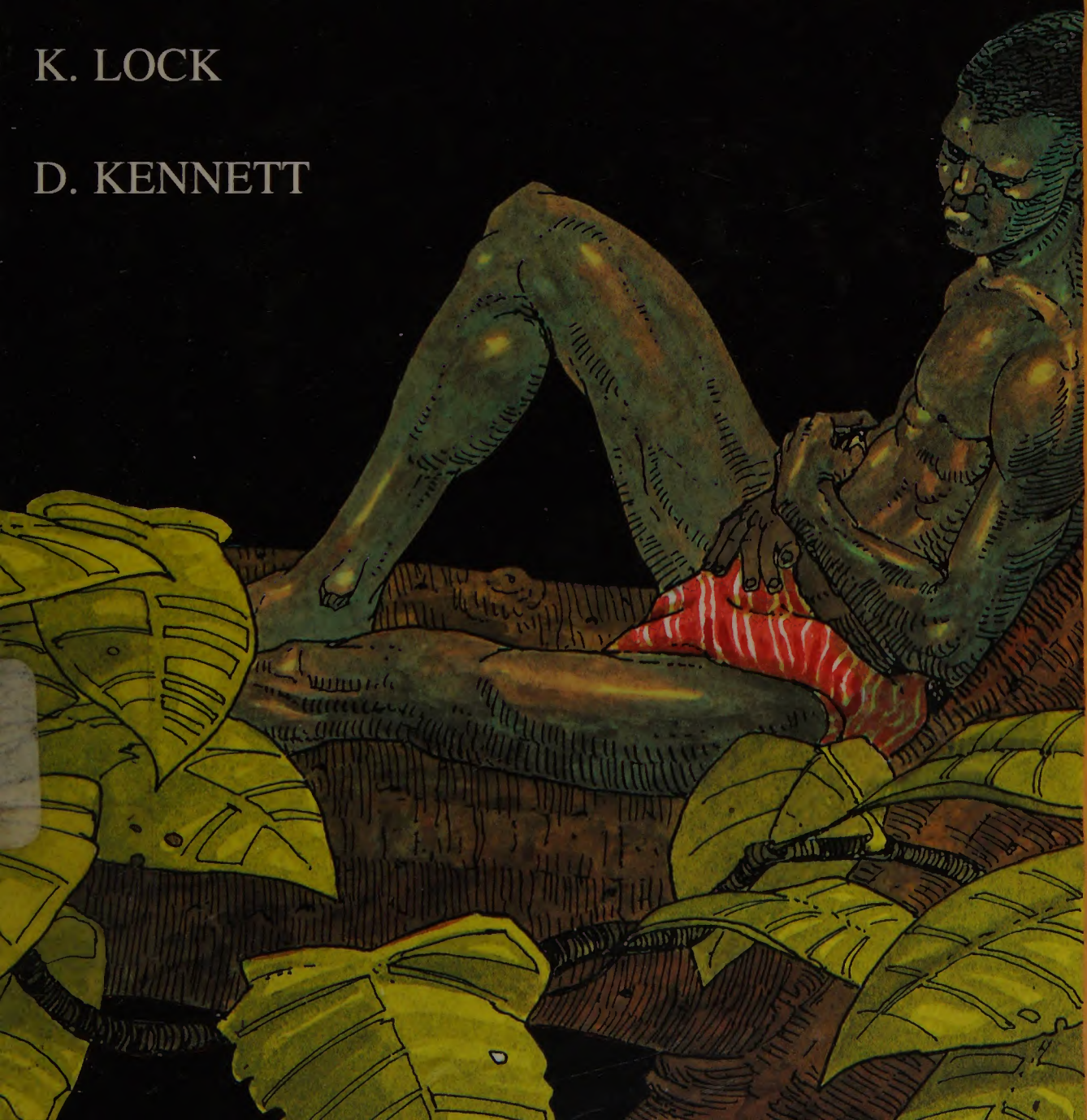


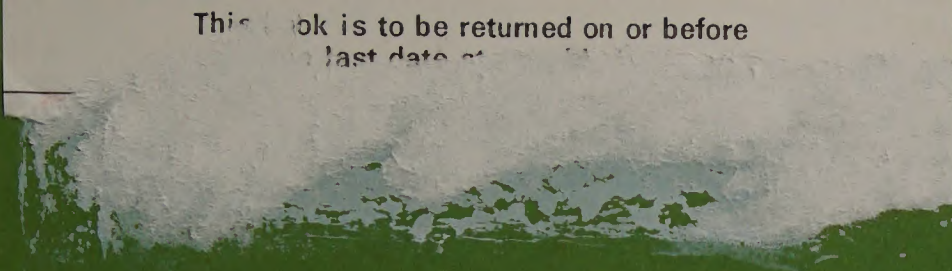
Anansi and the RUBBER MAN

K. LOCK

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Anansi and the
RUBBER MAN

For Steven

(K.L.)

For John Copeland

(D.K.)

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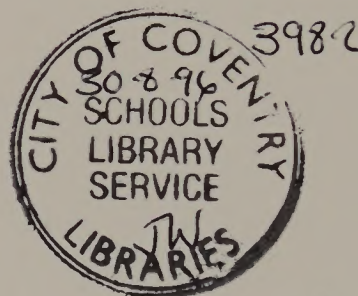
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Anansi and the RUBBER MAN

Retold by Kath Lock
Illustrated by David Kennett







nansi was lazy. All around him, while others were working, preparing their farm lands for their crops to be sown, Anansi did nothing. Other villagers worked in the mornings while Anansi lay in bed, resting his long legs. When they were working in the afternoons he was sleeping, curled up in a leafy tree. His friends and family worked hard, preparing for the new season, but Anansi slept the day away.

His wife was afraid that if Anansi continued to sleep they would have no crop and there would be no food for them when the seasons changed. She could see the other farmers hoeing, digging and planting. Each day she became more afraid of being hungry, but Anansi would not go into the fields.

Each morning his wife would say, "I am ready to work with you in the fields today, Anansi. You have only to tell me when you are ready." Each day Anansi would ignore his wife's words.







As time went on, it was not only Anansi's wife who spoke about the need to work on his farm. Everybody who went by chided him about his sleeping, and laughed at his excuses for not preparing his land.

These criticisms interrupted Anansi's rest, and he grew weary of the taunts, so he devised a plan.



“Tomorrow I shall begin sowing,” he told his wife. “Go to the market and buy a bag of peanuts. Make sure they are roasted and salted, and I will sow them tomorrow.”

“But Anansi, you cannot sow roasted and salted peanuts,” said his wife. “Such nuts are for eating. I should buy raw nuts for sowing.”

“Nonsense,” he retorted. “It will save us much time. If I sow nuts which are roasted and salted, then that is the type of nut which will grow. When the crop is ready, while everyone else is busy roasting and salting their nuts we will be able to take ours to market and sell the first roasted, salted nuts of the season. Because they will be first, we shall make a great deal of money.”

So his wife did as he asked and bought a bag of roasted, salted nuts. Of course, while she was away at the market, Anansi was asleep high in his shady tree.





Anansi came into the house soon after his wife returned from market. He stretched his long legs and complained about how tired he was from working so hard on the farm, preparing the soil for the sowing.

The next day, Anansi dragged the bag of nuts to his farm, and hid them in a tree where he liked to sleep. What a pleasant life he had then! Every day he would climb the tree and eat his fill of nuts. He would leave the tree only long enough to have a long cool drink at the stream nearby, then he would return to his shady spot to sleep for the rest of the day. As he dozed off he could hear his friends working in the fields at their crops, and he laughed at his cleverness.







When he climbed down from his tree each evening, he rubbed dirt all over his body so that he looked as though he had been working in the fields throughout the day.

At home each night he bragged about his ability to work his own farm, when others must have their wives working with them in their fields. As he ate his evening meal he stretched his long legs and complained of his tiredness. After telling his wife about how well the sowing was proceeding he would climb into his bed and sleep soundly.



At last the time came when farmers around the village were beginning to harvest their crops. Anansi's wife reminded him of how theirs were to be the first roasted, salted nuts to be sold in the market. Her friends were all working in the fields gathering nuts to be sold and to be stored for the season when no crops would grow.

"I will come with you to the harvesting," she told Anansi. "My friends tell me that their husbands' crops are good this year. The seasons have served us well. You too will have many bags of nuts to be gathered and stored. I am ready to work with you."

"Don't be silly, wife," said Anansi. "I do not want you working in the fields like other men's wives. I will harvest the nuts while you stay here and prepare my meals and have warm water ready for my bath when I return, tired and dirty from all the work I have done."



Secretly, Anansi was worried. He knew that he must produce some nuts or he and his wife would starve through the off-season. But of course he had no crop to harvest — no nuts to bring home or to sell.

Then he thought of a wonderful new plan.

Each night when his wife was asleep, Anansi crept from the house with a sack over his shoulder. He made his way to the chief's storage area and stole a sackful of nuts, careful never to take them all from the one place, but only a few from each storage bin, so that they would not be missed.

Each night he dragged the sack of nuts to his tree and hid them in the fork, so that the next day after his sleep he would be able to return to his wife and brag about his crop from the nuts which he had sown.



On the first night, his wife was disappointed.

“But these nuts are not roasted and salted,” she cried out. “These are ordinary nuts. You told me that if you were to sow roasted, salted nuts, then that is what we would have to sell.”

“Oh, wife, you must have misunderstood me,” said Anansi. “You must know that roasted, salted nuts cannot be grown. They must be harvested like this, then they are roasted and salted. Perhaps you were concentrating on something else when I was talking with you?”

Each day, when Anansi was sleeping high in the shady tree, his wife roasted and salted the nuts which he had stolen from the chief's storage bins.



Eventually the chief's servant noticed that the nuts were missing. At first he thought that the lids had not been put carefully on the bins, and that something was nibbling at them during the night. When he took care to seal the bins carefully and still the nuts disappeared, he knew that they were being stolen and he determined to catch the thief.

He went into the bushlands until he came to a clump of rubber trees. He scored the bark in long slashes and he left a cup at the base of each tree to collect the sap as it oozed from the trunk. The next day he took this back to his farm and moulded it until it was the shape of a man. He dressed the rubber man to look as though he had been working in the fields and then stood him in the area where the nuts were stored while they were being prepared for marketing.

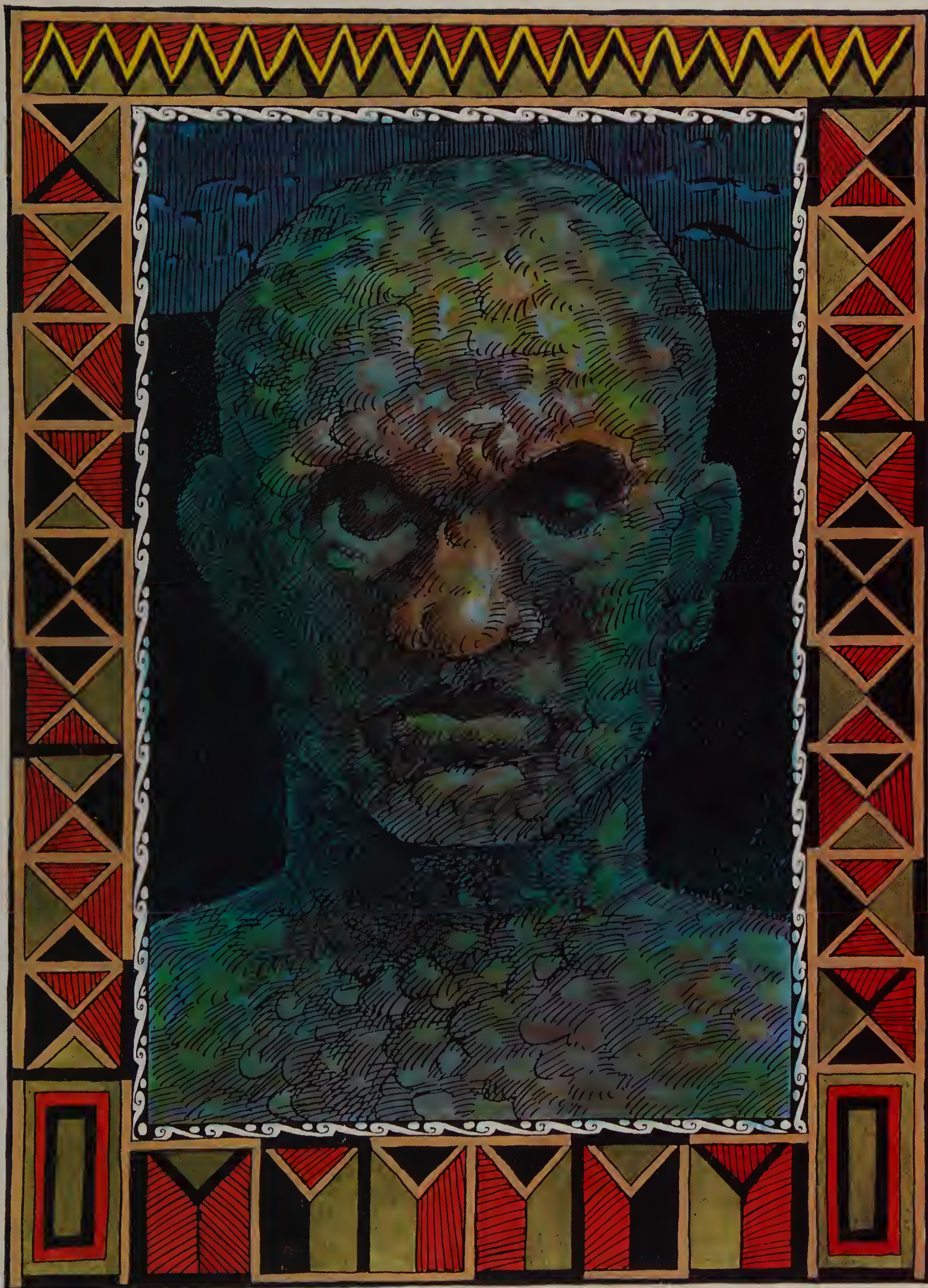


That night, as he had done every night, Anansi sneaked out of his house with his sack over his shoulder. He crept into the chief's storage area and he filled his sack with nuts. As he was leaving he caught sight of the rubber man.

"Who are you?" he cried out in fright. "What do you want with me?" The rubber man, of course, did not answer. "Why are you in the chief's storage area at this time of the night?" called Anansi, even more frightened. Still the rubber man did not answer.

Anansi ran to the rubber man.

"Why do you not answer when I speak to you?" He screamed, for now he was very frightened indeed.





When the rubber man still did not answer, Anansi struck him with his hand, but the rubber man was very sticky, and Anansi's hand stuck fast to the face.

"Let me go!" Anansi shouted. He hit out at the rubber man with his other hand and with his legs. Eventually he butted the rubber man with his head. He was stuck fast.



“Oh, how foolish I was to have done these things,” he moaned as he lay trapped all night. At dawn he would surely be found out as the thief. “Everyone in the village will know that I have been lazy and have been stealing nuts from the chief.” He was stuck fast, and so there was nothing that he could do except wait — and be repentent.

In the morning when the chief’s workers found Anansi they laughed to see him stuck to the rubber man. Poor Spider Anansi. How ashamed he was.

And so, forever after, Anansi hid, spider-like in the darkest corners of his house and his tree, so that no one would see him.

Indeed, some say that is why spiders still hide in dark corners, to this very day.







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ANANSI & THE RUBBER MAN

Lazy Anansi tells lies to his wife, laughs at other men at work in the fields, and steals — just so he can loaf all day in a shady tree. But Anansi is in for a big surprise.

This is just one of the many humorous Anansi tales from Ghana.



Kath Lock

Listening to traditional stories is one of Kath Lock's best-loved memories of childhood in a country town. Later in life, Kath chose to study children's literature. Her research for a Master of Education degree brought her back to many tales she could recall from her childhood.

Kath has written six children's books and has five more on the way. She lives in the country town of Riverton, South Australia and is a primary school teacher.

David Kennett

David Kennett studied illustration in Adelaide, South Australia. So far he has illustrated 14 children's books. He thinks that illustration should have emotion in it, and the series of folk tales he has completed show exactly what he means by this.

In the illustrations for this series, David has used a variety of media, including pen and ink wash, acrylic and some pencil.

David lives in Adelaide, but his books are sold around the world.

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